



# Update on Suisun Marsh Plan

October 2004

## Charter Group



### First Issue

This is the first issue of a newsletter designed to update the public about the Suisun Marsh Plan (SMP) process. You will receive this newsletter several times a year, depending on what is happening. If you received a paper copy of this newsletter, we don't have your email address. If you would prefer to be on the email list, or to add other names to the list, please send an email address to [carolyn\\_fassler@fws.gov](mailto:carolyn_fassler@fws.gov).

### *What's going on now?*

#### **Suisun Marsh Environmental Approval Process Moving Forward**

The California Department of Fish and Game will soon release a request for qualifications to prepare the programmatic environmental impact statement/report (PEIS/R) for the *Habitat Management, Preservation, and Restoration Plan for the Suisun Marsh*, or Suisun Marsh Plan (SMP) for short. The purpose of the SMP is to provide for the protection and enhancement of the vital Pacific Flyway, of existing wildlife in the managed wetlands, and of endangered species, plus the maintenance and improvement of levees, restoration of tidal marsh and other ecosystems in the Suisun Marsh, and improving water quality.

The PEIS/R is an essential and important step in moving forward with this broad-ranging project. The PEIS/R will analyze the environmental impacts--positive and adverse--of alternatives being considered for the plan.

The SMP also will include actions relative to amendment to the 1987 Suisun Marsh Preservation Agreement and strategies to resolve permitting issues related to past and ongoing maintenance and management activities. The goals for the SMP include: rehabilitation of the natural ecological processes in the marsh, revitalizing habitats, improving levee integrity, decreasing non-native species, improving water quality, maintaining the heritage of waterfowl hunting in the marsh, and developing long-term stability in funding and regulation and management.

The RFQ for the PEIS/R will be released soon. Because the PEIS/R is on a fast track, the contractor should be selected and at work next spring. The goal is to complete a draft PEIS/R and release it for public comment in fall of 2005.

The Scoping Report for the SMP, completed last spring, is also available on the website [www.delta.dfg.ca.gov/suisunmarsh/charter](http://www.delta.dfg.ca.gov/suisunmarsh/charter)

#### **Conceptual Model Development Under Way**

The SMP Team is developing five conceptual models to integrate science into development of the Suisun Marsh Plan. These models are: tidal wetlands, managed wetlands, water quality, levees, and sub-tidal aquatic. These descriptive models detail current knowledge of existing conditions and, following review by subject area experts, will be made available to the public next spring. These models will be used, along with additional models developed through other efforts, to study the effects of changing conditions and restoration efforts. With the knowledge gained from restoration efforts in the Marsh, the models will continue to develop over time and can be used as predictive models for additional restoration projects.

#### **Science Advisor Sought to Assure Science is Integrated into the Plan**

Good science is the bedrock on which a successful ecosystem management plan is built. The CALFED Bay-Delta Program is committed to making its decisions on sound science, and that commitment is reflected in the approach used in developing the SMP.



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The Suisun  
Marsh Plan is:

Local, state and federal agencies that, through the CALFED Bay-Delta Program, help improve the San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary are partnering on a plan to protect and enhance wild life values and water quality in Suisun Marsh, the largest brackish wetland in the western United States. Members of the partnership, known as the Suisun Marsh Charter Group, are the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries), the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the California Department of Fish and Game, the California Department of Water Resources, and the California Bay-Delta Authority. The partnership also includes the Suisun Resource Conservation District, which represent the interests of private landowners. The Charter Group works with other participating agencies, including the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in

## *What's going on now?(cont.)*

### **Science Advisor Sought to Assure Science is Integrated into the Plan (cont)**

The SMP team is seeking a highly knowledgeable, widely respected science advisor to help guide development of the SMP. The science advisor will help the management team in its review of options, including recruitment of a solid group of peer reviewers.

The objective is to assure that the plan achieves preservation and enhancement of managed seasonal wetlands, restoration of tidal marsh habitat, implementation of a comprehensive levee protection/improvement program, and protection of the ecosystem and drinking water quality within the Suisun Marsh.

A formal Request for Qualifications (RFQ) will be issued soon for the science advisor. To follow this process, check the website periodically for the announcement.

### **What's Happening Along 680 (Hint: Kinder-Morgan)**

Drivers speeding along Interstate 680 between Cordelia and Benicia may be curious about the trenching and white pipe being installed along the freeway. The answer is that the work is Kinder Morgan Energy Partners' installation of a new petroleum pipeline to replace its older line that now runs through Suisun Marsh. Work on the replacement line was begun soon after the April 27 break in its line near the Drake Sprig Duck Club that spilled more than 103,000 gallons of diesel into the marsh.

When the new line is completed in the uplands along 680, it will replace the line that now runs through the Marsh, thus removing the risk from that line of future spills into the sensitive ecosystem. An 8-inch petroleum pipeline will remain in service, delivering fuel to Travis Air Force Base. For more information on last spring's spill, log onto

<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/ospr/spills/signif%20events/suisun%20pipeline.htm>

## *What's coming up?*

### **What's Next?**

First, a contractor for the PEIS/R should be at work before the end of this year. Also by the end of this year the team hopes to complete the conceptual models, for peer review, then release to the public.

The draft PEIS/R is scheduled to be circulated for public review and comment next spring. Then the full SMP will be completed.



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